

**Mariia Kostainen**

# **INTERNET SAFETY FOR CHILDREN**

Finnish practices and stakeholders

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Supervisor: Liisa Häikiö

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**Mariia Kostiainen**

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**ABSTRACT**

Internet has become a big part of our lives. It provides a lot of opportunities, at the same time exposing its users, and children in particular, to new risks. Rapid technological development, together with growing accessibility to the Internet, requires regulatory and preventive actions to be taken in order to deal with those risks adequately. Scholars debate on the account of who has the authority and competence to take up on these actions. Among professionals of the Internet governance it is acknowledged that, because of the nature of the Internet, it cannot be regulated by only one body, but for achieving most effective results, its governance should involve multiple actors who have a stake in these matters. Furthermore, technological development brings along certain conceptual changes, such as different vision of the risk itself. Hence, addressing the issue demands new forms of governance where the state might not have the traditional leading role.

This thesis gives an overview of Finnish actors and practices in the field of online safety for children. It also provides an analysis of discourse among Finnish experts around the topic of children's online safety, with the focus on cooperation between various actors. Experts from five organizations are interviewed for the purposes of this research: National Audiovisual Institute, Mannerheim League of Child Welfare, Save the Children Finland, Microsoft, and EU Kids Online Finland. They represent different groups of stakeholders and work with online safety from different perspectives. Semi-structured interview is used as research method for collecting data, and discourse analysis in combination with multi-stakeholder approach are applied to analyze the data.

One of the very important findings of this research is the difference in how online safety is viewed by Finnish actors in contrast to the general discourse around the topic. This research has also identified the most common ways of cooperation between Finnish stakeholders: discussion, joint actions and funding. Contributions of civil society (as individual impact) and international organizations were also underlined as important components among the ways of cooperation. Among other actors, this research was primarily interested in the role of the state. Based on the findings of this research it is possible to conclude that Finnish state is in a rather pro-active role in the matters of education in general and online safety in particular. Finnish practices often present interesting cases which deserve to be spread and applied in other countries worldwide.

**Keywords:** Internet safety, online risks, Internet governance, multi-stakeholder approach, discourse analysis, Finland, media education, policy making

***“We shouldn’t teach kids our past, we should teach them their future!”***

*Juuso Repo, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

## Contents

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. GOVERNING ONLINE RISKS</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Online risks	4
2.2. Internet governance	7
2.3. Multi-stakeholder approach	11
<b>3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1. Research question	14
3.2. Research methods	16
3.3. Selecting respondents	19
3.4. Collecting and analyzing data	24
<b>4. ONLINE SAFETY AS A COMPONENT OF MEDIA EDUCATION</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1. Media education: broader vision of online safety	30
4.2. Expanded context generates more diverse risks	33
4.3. Risks vs. opportunities	35
4.4. Changing media habits	36
4.5. Summary	38
<b>5. ACTORS AND COOPERATION</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1. Ways of cooperation and interaction	40
5.2. Individual impact	49
5.3. International cooperation	52
5.4. What could be done more?	53
5.5. Summary	55
<b>6. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>7. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>62</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Internet has become inevitable part of our lives and the amount of connected households is rapidly growing. According to Eurostat in the year 2015 around 90 per cent of Finnish households had Internet access at home, which makes it one of the highest percentages in the world (Eurostat, 2015). Large number of these connections consists of children and young people, and comparing to other European countries, percentage of Finnish children using Internet is among the highest (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012).

Children use Internet in a variety of ways. Their usage is constantly evolving considering the developments in the field of technology. Initially Internet was accessible through stationary computer, located in the household, and now technologies allow kids to surf the web while sitting in a bus on the way to school. Certainly, using Internet brings lots of opportunities to children, but it also exposes them to new risks and dangers.

Apart from technological advancement, it is worth mentioning, that during last decades Internet itself has undergone through a number of transformations and most of these transformations changed the very basic principles of how it used to function. For instance, software and technologies are no longer developed by nonprofit research bodies, as it used to be in the very beginning. Instead, those are commercial enterprises that are getting more and more interested in developing all the essential elements for using the Internet (Desai, 2007).

Another example of drastic changes is the fact that the Internet is no longer serving as a tool for one-way communication. Users are not only receiving information, but they are also able to generate and spread their own content with the help of variety of tools and platforms (Desai, 2007).

We can all agree that there is much more information these days and it is much more available comparing to, let's say, hundred or even fifty years ago. However, it is not only the amount and the availability of the information that has altered, the very nature of information is different nowadays and, moreover, it has changed the way we live. Trying to find a suitable definition of

*information society* Frank Webster (2006) points out newly emerged importance of theoretical knowledge and presents it as a key characteristic of today's world. He argues that contemporary society relies more on theoretical knowledge, contrasting it to previous arrangements where practical knowledge, skill, experience and experiment were of a greater value. Theory is studied by various specialists and then it is put into practice. Webster emphasizes the importance of theoretical knowledge in almost every aspect of our lives, impacting our personal choices (for instance, opting for a healthier lifestyle, being aware of diseases and outcomes associated with bad habits) and decisions made by authorities impacting the course of country's policies (such as developing necessary programs to improve demographical situation in the country considering the knowledge about aging society). At the same time, theory allows modern society to take giant steps towards innovation and development, saving time and resources on same experiments over and over again. (Webster, 2006)

Not only the nature of information and the way it is used, but also technological development itself brings along conceptual changes. For instance, the understanding of *risk* is changing together with new technologies being developed. The risk itself used to be seen as the result of personal behavior and choices, however in modern world this concept has shifted. Being exposed to certain risks is the result of common actions, instead of individual decisions (Hiskes, 1998; Loon, 2000). This also reflects on online risks. With no doubt, when speaking of tackling online risks, children are the ones in center of our attention. They certainly need to develop digital skills in order to be able to protect themselves in a first place. But at the same time, even with all the necessary skills, they are still exposed to dangers, produced by other participants of the web.

Taking all of these transformations and developments into account, the need for enhancement of our traditional regulatory settings and approaches is discussed as well. Online safety of children to great extent depends on other actors. Exactly for that reason it is often seen as a multi-stakeholder field, where different actors share responsibilities among each other (O'Neill, 2012). Internet governance, as a broader process behind online safety, inherits this vision of multistakeholderism and involves various actors in the process of Internet regulation, raising the question of power distribution among them.

In this research I focus on the role of different stakeholders, stepping aside from the Internet governance and bringing multi-stakeholder approach to the context of online safety. I am interested to have a look at stakeholders that are involved in dealing with children's online safety in Finland. The value of this research lays in providing a better understanding of Finnish practices in the field of online safety, including the cooperation between various actors.

As a student of social policy I have been mainly examining the issues in societies from the perspective of the state as a provider, as an actor. Within this research, in addition to state impact, I would also like to see the role of other actors on the institutional level. In this paper I intend to have a closer look at the multi-stakeholder approach and then move to analyzing the role of different actors of the process and examine their cooperation. Experts from different institutions share their expertise over the issue of online safety and describe in detail the ways they carry out their activities separately or together with other stakeholders.

This thesis consists of six chapters and is structured as follows. This introductory chapter aims to provide a general description of the study and familiarize the reader with what to expect from this thesis. Second chapter describes the issue of online safety in more detail and views it as a part of a broader process of Internet Governance. It also covers certain theoretical aspects providing a deeper insight on multi-stakeholder approach. Research methodology is described in the third chapter of this thesis, which gives overall justification for the study, presents two research questions, and provides a description of methods used for collecting and analyzing data. Fourth and fifth chapters are both devoted to analysis and findings. Each of these chapters correspondingly covers one of the research questions, describing different perspectives on the Internet safety, introducing various actors involved in dealing with the issue and illustrating the way they cooperate with each other. Sixth chapter provides a general summary of the thesis and outlines its findings and conclusions. Discussion over the challenges which arose while researching the topic of new technologies are also presented in the sixth chapter.

## 2. GOVERNING ONLINE RISKS

This chapter is called to describe the vision of online safety and place it in the context of a broader process of the Internet governance, which also discusses the need for new governing models and approaches. Among suggested innovations is the multi-stakeholder approach, which will be described in the end of this chapter.

### 2.1. Online risks

The concept of *online risk* is so broad that it is rather challenging to give an exhaustive definition or summary. For the purpose of this research I would like to narrow it down. First of all, the focus of this paper is on those risks that affect children, but not the general public. Secondly, there is a great deal of potential risks that children could be exposed to online, but due to the nature of their activities they are most likely not to face them. Thirdly, online risks can have a direct impact and indirect impact. For example, browsing Internet on your computer for the whole day can eventually result in obesity. Online environment itself does not directly carry this obesity problem, but sedentary lifestyle, which is caused by child's attachment to online world, does. I am interested in direct risks. Therefore, within this subchapter, I would like to focus my attention on those risks to which children are exposed to on the Internet and to the most extent.

Internet is widely used among children. According to the cross-national research, carried out in 25 European countries by the EU Kids Online, 86 per cent of children aged from nine to sixteen report using Internet at least once a week, while in Finland 98 per cent of children report going online occasionally. Moreover, four out of five Finnish children of that age use Internet every day or almost every day (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012). Most commonly children start using Internet around the age of seven, however with the introduction of different handheld devices, such as smartphones and tablets, the age of 'online children' has been dropping rapidly (Mascheroni, Ólafsson, 2014).

Children use the Internet for various purposes: education, fun, entertainment, socializing, expressing themselves in many different ways. Variety of activities they tend to be engaged in



online has an extremely wide range and all these activities can be beneficial to children in even wider range of ways. For instance, most of the European kids use Internet for school projects (Livingstone, et al. 2011). Not surprisingly, educational purposes are reported by parents to be the main reason to allow their children access the Internet. Parents believe that Internet has a positive impact on their children's advancement in school, as well as on preparation for professional life (Ktoridou, Eteokleous, Zahariadou, 2012).

Along with these opportunities, children are exposed to certain risks and they become vulnerable to a number of new dangers. As an example, children tend to use Internet a lot for the purpose of socializing - messaging appears to be among the most common online activities (Livingstone, et al. 2011). Children and young people keep in touch with each other via instant messengers, webcams and social network sites on a daily basis. Regretfully, for some children this kind of communication also brings negative shades because of hurtful messages and bullying. EU Kids Online research shows that bullying in general is one of the most spread risks among children. It takes place both online and offline, however, as reported by children, online bullying is much less common (Livingstone, et al, 2011). Even though cyberbullying is not that spread among Finnish children, it is one of the risks that upsets them the most (Livingstone, et al. 2010). Another risk associated with messaging is 'sexting', which appears to be slightly more common among Finnish children when compared to Europe as a whole (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012).

The list of risks is indeed very broad. Among the most common risks faced online are: pornography, bullying, receiving sexual messages, contacting people not known face to face, meeting online contacts offline, potentially harmful user-generated content and personal data misuse (Livingstone, et al. 2010).

Researchers of the EU Kids Online came to conclusion that the more children use Internet, the more likely they have encountered one or more risks. At the same time, children who use Internet more often can benefit to greater extent and get more opportunities. Consequently, increasing Internet access brings both increased risks and increased opportunities. However, it does remain a difficult task to draw the line between them. (Livingstone, et al. 2010)

One of the EU Kids Online reports claims that ‘in countries where children do a wider range of activities online they also have more digital skills’. This means that those children who use different social platforms, messaging applications and visit more websites, usually have better knowledge of how to change their privacy settings, block unwanted contact, and evaluate a website, compared to children who, for example, just watch videos online. However, this does not seem to be the case for Finland. The list of Finnish children’s online activities is often rather limited when contrasted to activities of European children, even though the amount of time Finnish children spend online is much higher (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012). This might explain the findings that children in Finland seem to encounter less risks. At the same time, Finnish children claim to know the most digital and safety skills in Europe. As suggested by the authors of the EU Kids Online report one of the reasons might lay in effective campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the issue, proper regulatory strategies or suitable techniques of parental mediation of children’s Internet use. Finland has been showing remarkable results in creating safe online environment without over-restricting children’s access to the World Wide Web. (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012)

Potentially, these risks could be localized and dealt with on a household level: there are technical solutions parents can use to monitor the usage, restrict access to certain web pages, etc. However, we have to understand that the variety of ways and places that allow a child to access Internet, makes it harder to control the usage. Furthermore, as a method of keeping one’s child safe on the Internet, despite being most common, restriction is not necessarily the best solution. Nancy Willard (2012) describes ‘cyber savvy’ children as those who have necessary skills to navigate online world. This idea is opposed to restrictive measures, when parents and schools simply block access to unwanted content (Willard, 2012).

The specificity of development of information technologies lays in its fast and very rapid change. For that reason, it is crucial for policy makers to keep up with the developments in the world of information technologies in order to shape the values, priorities and directions.

It is important to provide children and young people with a safe online environment, teach them responsible behavior on the web, make them aware of the dangers they might face and prevent the incidence of online risks. Therefore, one of the fields governments should pay extra attention to is

the development of policies and practices aimed at ensuring safety and protection for participants of the network, especially the youngest ones.

The main interest of my research is online safety and issues related to it. However, in order to understand the issue one must consider the broader picture behind it. Online safety is a just a little part of more general process of Internet regulation, which is widely referred to as Internet governance. In its own right, Internet governance is a rather complex topic as well.

## **2.2. Internet governance**

In the context of children's rights and vulnerabilities, it would be natural to assume that state has the leading regulatory role. However, on the larger scale, when it comes to regulating matters on the Internet, many scholars debate the role of the state and its power. For instance, Andrew Power and John Morison (2014) argue that national governments do not exactly have the potential to meet our expectations as digital citizens. They state that governments, in the sense of national parliaments, do not have the range and the effect to regulate certain aspects of the Internet and therefore are not capable of being the ones representing digital interests on behalf of its citizens. To certain extent it might be caused by the fact that governments are rather slow and cannot keep the legislation and procedural basis up to date due to the rapid development of technology (Power, Morison, 2014).

At the same time, it is necessary to keep in mind certain conceptual changes that took place due to this rapid development. One of these conceptual changes is in the way the *risk* is seen. Following the broad definition of risk - as a probability of something bad to happen - and, based on Ulrich Beck's theory on *Risk Society*, Joost van Loon (2000) introduces the discussion of risks from the virtual perspective and he distinguishes virtual risks from the ones of the 'real world'. In order to assess the risk one needs to take into account the dimension of time and space in which certain risk exists. Apart from these attributes, in its traditional understanding, risk also suggests a decision-making process. This attribute distincts risk from a hazard. Whenever something bad happens to someone without evident causal relation it is perceived as a hazard. But as soon as certain behavior is linked to specific consequences and the harm can be consciously avoided by making a corresponding decision, it becomes a risk. (Loon, 2000)

However, as argued by Richard Hiskes (1998), modern technologies present us with risks that are not caused by personal decisions or choices, and responsible individual behavior does not always result in reduced exposure to those risks. Instead, these ‘emergent’ risks are the result of collective behaviors and choices. Thus, Hiskes places technological risk in the context of politics and policy making. In contrast to ideas of liberal politics, which underline individual actions and making emphasis on personal responsibility together with private rights and liberties (mainly in the context of our political engagement), Hiskes views our lives as interconnected, when personal actions and decisions impact others. He also stresses that because of this shift, from personal to collective, modern risks are posing difficulties to liberal societies, where political institutions are not able to react on them correspondingly. Richard Hiskes argues that risks introduce conceptual changes (altering our behavior and paradigms) and therefore they ought to beget political innovation (Hiskes, 1998).

In this paper I would like to rely on this vision of necessity to transform existing political systems and look for new arrangements. To be more exact, the role of the state, when it comes to Internet governance in general and children’s online safety in particular, is thought to have changed already, shifting from the leading part to becoming one of the stakeholders among others (Power, 2014). This is where the main interest of my research lays - the other stakeholders of the field of online safety and, more specifically, their cooperation with each other. Online risks arose from new technologies and they pose new challenges to the state. Following Hiskes’ ideas, online risks should be addressed using new political arrangements. Such new arrangements are now topic for a hot discussion among participants of Internet governance.

According to the definition of the United Nations Working Group on the Internet Governance (WGIG), Internet governance is “the development and application by Governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet” (Bossey, 2005).

This definition provides us with three main groups of stakeholders: governments, private sector and civil society. Since the development of this definition research and discussion of this topic has

taken it further. Participants of the Internet governance process, together with researchers, argue that the list of stakeholders is not limited to these groups and includes more categories of actors into the picture. Apart from those already mentioned - states, commercial companies and civil society - the list is also composed of: intergovernmental organizations; international organizations (non-commercial, non-civil society, private sector organizations); academic community; and technical community (Hill, 2014). This vision is indeed much broader and more inclusive than the one adopted by WGIG.

There is an ongoing discussion among scholars of various fields about the components of Internet governance, its structure, tasks and models. As discussed by Lawrence B. Solum (Solum, 2009), Internet governance can be viewed from more narrow and more broad perspectives. The narrow one sees the regulation of the Internet from technical point of view, such as regulating the IP numbers and domain names; while the broader one also includes a set of policy issues, such as regulation of gambling, child pornography, freedom of speech, and so on. Even though these two perspectives may seem like independent issues, they are very closely interlinked. Furthermore, the regulating process of technical components would differ a lot from the one related to policy issues. Nevertheless, they should not be parted. (Solum, 2009)

Amanda Hubbard and Lee A. Bygrave agree that Internet governance cannot be carried out by only one official or institution, it is a multilayered process and requires professionals from various fields to work together on different levels (Hubbard, Bygrave, 2009). Based on the broader perspective DeNardis and Raymond (2013) suggest division of the main tasks of the Internet governance including the following six areas:

- control of “critical Internet resources”;
- setting Internet standards;
- access and interconnection coordination;
- cybersecurity governance;
- the policy role of information intermediaries;
- architecture-based intellectual property rights enforcement.

Based on this division of tasks authors provided a detailed list of specific organizations, companies, national authorities that virtually administrate and enable the functioning of the Internet together (DeNardis, Raymond, 2013).

During the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in the years 2003 and 2005 professionals of various fields interested in the Internet governance reached a consensus that these groups of actors should not just work in their respective roles, but they should also work together (Kleinwächter, 2007). One of the preconditions for this agreement was the mounting political concern among the nations represented at the meeting that the administration of Internet's core operational functions might become unilateral, which would contradict even to the very nature of the Internet (DeNardis, Raymond, 2013). The achieved consensus of the need for cooperation between the actors and the need for a common platform to execute this cooperation led to creation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which took place for the first time in Athens in 2006. The Internet Governance Forum is mainly seen as a tool to ensure multi-stakeholder participation in the context of Internet governance. IGF is an annual conference. It has no decision-making power, but it has power to encourage exchange of ideas and opinions, shape discussions, initiate policy proposals and have an impact on national and international governance structures (ISOC, 2013).

Internet Governance Forum is argued to have more potential for agenda-setting and framing functions, rather than being an actual tool in the policymaking process, due to its limited influence (DeNardis, Raymond, 2013). Experience and knowledge exchange during discussion and, consequently, undertaking joint actions by various stakeholders as the results of these discussions are seen as positive and important outcomes of IGF (Kleinwächter, 2007).

Taking into account the variety of actors involved in the Internet governance process it is natural to describe it as multi-stakeholder. The following subchapter will provide a closer look at multistakeholderism.

## **2.3. Multi-stakeholder approach**

In the previous section it was emphasized on involvement of more than one actor in the process of governance, in this case Internet governance. Cooperation and involvement of different actors has been referred to as multi-stakeholder approach. This approach is rather young and it is being recognized among professionals in various fields. Originating from the context of environmental governance and sustainable development (Bäckstrand, 2006), it appeared in the discourse around Internet governance in the early 2000s (Kleinwächter, 2007).

There is an ongoing debate among participants of the Internet governance process about the terminology used when speaking of multistakeholderism, as well as the definition of the term itself. There is no single practice of this model either. The notion used most widely is the one formulated by the UN Working Group on Internet Governance explaining the multi-stakeholder approach as collaboration between “governments, the private sector and the civil society, in their respective roles” (Bossey, 2005). Notably, this is actually an extract from the definition of the Internet governance process. This collaboration is expected to take place in regards to development and implementation of norms, principles, policies, and rules in matters related to the Internet. This definition implies that there is no single authority over the Internet, and at the same time this definition does not provide any guidelines for the process. There is a clear notion that the definition of this approach needs to be improved (ISOC, 2013)

While there is no single academic definition of multistakeholderism, there is a fitting commentary provided by Joy Liddicoat and Avri Doria (2012) stating that multi-stakeholder model is “a form of participatory democracy that allows all of those who have a stake in a policy to take part in crafting that policy” (Liddicoat, Doria, 2012). At the same time multistakeholderism is built on the idea of inclusion, openness and cooperation. (ISOC, 2013)

Stepping aside from the Internet governance and borrowing terminology from the field of environmental development, United Nations Development Program within their Framework Convention on Climate Change described the multi-stakeholder process as follows:

*“The aim of multi-stakeholder processes are to promote better decision making by ensuring that the views of the main actors concerned about a particular decision are heard and integrated at all stages through dialogue and consensus building. The process takes the view that everyone involved in the process has a valid view and relevant knowledge and experience to bring to the decision making. The approach aims to create trust between the actors and solutions that provide mutual benefits.”*

*UNDP, Framework Convention on Climate Change*

There is a common agreement that multi-stakeholder model presents a lot of advantages, however there is no clear agreement on how exactly this approach should be implemented (Hill, 2014). Conceptual and theoretical tools should be developed in order for the Internet governance to be effective in any functional and political context. Multi-stakeholder model does not provide this kind of tools and it might not be applicable to every area of Internet governance. (DeNardis, Raymond 2013)

Internet’s infrastructure and its governance are constantly changing. Some researchers express the vision that multi-stakeholder model does not fit for all the components of the Internet governance. They argue that some tasks may still be appropriate to be performed by private sector while some should rely on the traditional state governance, as Internet governance in itself includes tasks that vary from technical architecture to policymaking. (DeNardis, Raymond 2013)

Other researchers question the very fact of Internet governance being a democratic process (Hill, 2014). Among the recognized challenges lying in front of the multi-stakeholder governance the Internet society fears that eventually the power might be shifted to one of the stakeholder groups, such as large corporations, therefore they emphasize on the need to develop a better democratic basis and model for multi-stakeholder process. (Power, Morison, 2014)

DeNardis and Raymond (2013) suggest that in order for a multi-stakeholder process to be called such, there has to be at least two actors of different classes involved in the discussion. Based on the classification of actors according to the international relations theory authors describe in more details what this involvement looks like. They consider four classes of stakeholders: states, intergovernmental organizations, firms, civil society. While it is rather clear what stands behind the first three classes, it seems crucial to mention that the last class, named “civil society”, includes



nongovernmental organizations, civil society groups and individuals acting on their own behalf. (DeNardis, Raymond, 2013)

In their later paper they (Raymond, DeNardis, 2015) sum up their previous conclusions and give the following definition of multistakeholderism: “when two or more classes of actors engaged in a common governance enterprise concerning issues they regard as public in nature, and characterized by polyarchic authority relations constituted by procedural rules”. In addition to their previous description of the process, authors also attribute the relation of power to the participants of multi-stakeholder approach. They argue that another condition for multistakeholderism is polyarchic power relation between the actors. (Raymond, DeNardis, 2015)

The matter of power relation between actors is also discussed by Hiskes (1998). He includes state, industries, laboratories and workplace in the process of exercising power and describes several types of power from perspective of technological risk: political, economic, intellectual and administrative (Hiskes, 1998). The question of power relations is indeed an important aspect of interaction between actors. However, the topic is rather complex and deserves to be unfolded properly in the future research of this field, while this research will focus on others, not least important issues.

One of the features of multi-stakeholder approach is that it could be applied in any field where interests of several parties are at stake. Instead of very global and wide matters of Internet governance, I would like to focus on the matters of online safety for children. In this thesis I will try to see it from the perspective of several stakeholders involved in the matters related to Internet safety.

For the purpose of this thesis I am interested in the first dimension of the multistakeholderism definition provided by DeNardis and Raymond (2013), stating that there is a need for actors of at least two classes to be involved in the process for it to be called multi-stakeholder. These definition and classification of actors provide me with specific tools for analyzing the nature of cooperation between selected actors.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to methodological aspects of this research. In the beginning of the chapter I will give justification to my study and present the research question. After doing so, I will focus on describing the empirical part of this study. Following to having introduced the way I selected respondents and collected data I will move to the next part describing the research methods used for performing analysis. For carrying out data analysis within this qualitative research I chose a combination of tools provided by discourse analysis and multi-stakeholder approach.

#### **3.1. Research question**

Technologies develop very rapidly and the Internet becomes more accessible with each year, each month, or even each day. Both technologies and online world bring a lot of opportunities to its users. At the same time, there is a great deal of dangers and risks that people might face online. Especially when we talk about children. For several years the topic of online safety and children's Internet usage has been of a special interest for me. Children's online habits and behavior in particular were initially in the focus of my interest. However, as this is a topic of hot discussion at the moment and there are plenty of studies carried out describing peculiarities of children's Internet usage in details, I decided to focus my attention on the role of different organizations and institutions as actors, who have a significant impact on these issues.

The list of actors who play important role in ensuring children's online safety is indeed very long. In the findings of the study conducted by EU Kids Online research network it is specified that parents, schools, governments and industries are the ones most actively involved in performing safeguarding and mediating measures (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012). Among others, parents play a significant role in what kind of risks their kids are exposed to online and whether or not they know how to deal with them, though in this research I am specifically interested to have a look at the role of institutions, but not individuals. Therefore, for the purpose of this study I have selected several actors representing state, non-governmental organizations, industry and academia, who deal with online safety for children directly. I will give a more detailed description of these actors later in this chapter.

Selecting a country for this research was not a difficult task. From the very beginning of my research, after having familiarized myself with the vision of Internet safety for children on the global scale - what kind of trends there are, what is the theoretical background - I started noticing some features that make Finnish practices distinct from other countries. In order to show these distinctions I would like to first describe the way in which main activities, aimed at promoting safer Internet, are organized on the European level and in Finland in particular. Activities have been mainly organized by the Safer Internet Centers. These Safer Internet Centers are responsible for promoting safer Internet and one of the main activities organized simultaneously in all the Centers of the network is the Safer Internet Day marked annually in the beginning of February. During this day each Center organizes different kind of events to promote safer Internet usage and raise the awareness of these issues (Safer Internet Day, 2016). However in Finland instead of one day activities are carried out throughout the whole week. Moreover, even though safer Internet issues are still a very big part of the event, media literacy is in the main focus of activities. Therefore, instead of Safer Internet Day Finland is holding Media Literacy Week. This broader vision of the issue is one of the things that differ Finland from other countries and at the same time it might be exactly the reason why Finland is doing so well in risk mediation.

Another distinction is in the usage itself. Studies reveal that the more kids use Internet the more risks they face (Livingstone, et al. 2010). At the same time Finnish children tend to spend more time online, comparing to their European peers, however, they report facing less risks (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012). There is no evidence-based explanation to that. It might be so, because of the mediation practices used in Finland by parents or schools. It as well could be due to effective programs providing children with necessary digital skills to cope with faced risks or avoid facing them at all.

Online safety is often spoken of as an important component of formal education process and it is not a secret that Finland has one of the best education systems in the world. According to the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Finland has been among top-performing countries throughout the whole evaluation period (OECD, 2016). According to Pasi Sahlberg, director general of the Finnish Center for International Mobility, early intervention

is a very important component and Finnish education system is designed to focus on preventive measures rather than dealing with the problem after it has become too obvious (OECD, 2012). It is worth mentioning that despite achieved high results in students' performance in international assessments, Finland still sees the need to reform their education system. Interestingly, high performance during tests has never been among priorities of educators or policymakers (Finnish schools do not even have tests or assessments until before the graduation), instead the system is built in a way that supports and encourages children in their learning process. (Kivinen, 2015)

This is why Finland makes a very interesting case to study. Finland definitely has a lot of good practices and ideas worth sharing among other countries worldwide. With this research I would like to focus on one of the constituents of this system - media education - and have a deeper look on the activities carried out in this field.

The study consists of two main parts. The first part is focused on the way Finnish actors see and talk about the issues related to Internet safety for children. Therefore, my first research question is: *what is the discourse around Internet safety among Finnish actors on the institutional level?* In the second part of this study I would like to have a look at activities carried out by different organizations through the prism of multistakeholderism and focus on the way these actors cooperate with each other. Considering this, my second research question is: *how do Finnish institutions cooperate with each other when carrying out activities aimed at tackling online risks?*

### **3.2. Research methods**

In order to answer my first research question about the discourse around Internet safety among Finnish actors I chose to apply the theory of discourse analysis. The notion of *discourse* has become of an interest for researchers around 1960s (Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014) and since then it has evolved into the new research field of *discourse analysis*. In today's world of research it has also been frequently referred to as *discourse studies* (Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014). It has been widely applied by researchers of various disciplines - sociology, philosophy, literary criticism, anthropology, history, political sciences, social psychology. (Alba-Juez, 2009; Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014; Molder, 2009). Such a wide application of this research field makes it rather difficult to state with confidence about its exact origins (Wodak,

Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014), however, most common vision is that it arrived from the field of linguistics and it is thought that linguist Zellig Harris was the first person to have used the term *discourse analysis* (Molder, 2009). Another vision attributes the development of discourse analysis as a distinct approach to linguists Sinclair and Coulthard (Potter, 2004).

Diversity of fields which discourse analysis has been applied in has also resulted in the large amount of schools, approaches and methods. Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller (2014) provide us with a list of most prominent thinkers of this field, such as: Michel Foucault, Michel Pêcheux, Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk, Jürgen Habermas, just to name a few. All of them have made their contributions to development of this field either by theorizing the concept, developing or describing the methods, or by providing more specific tools for carrying out analysis (Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014).

Discourse analysis has evolved into two main streams: social constructionist and Foucauldian (Stevenson, 2004). While many schools would pay a lot of attention to interaction as an important part of the discourse construction, the Foucauldian tradition of discourse analysis rather places the way a 'set of statements' construct certain objects in focus (Potter, 2004). In my research the object in focus is online safety and by applying this particular tradition of discourse analysis I am interested to see how respondents construct it. By talking about the activities of their organization and about the issues they have to deal with in their work respondents used specific terms and structures to refer to the phenomena in focus.

Discourse analysis as method of analysis appealed to me because of its multi-modality and universalistic approach. Similarly to multistakeholderism, discourse analysis has rather heterogeneous nature in different respects. First of all, in discourse analysis it is not enough to simply use the sentence as a unit of analysis. The context in which this sentence was produced is also important. When applying discourse analysis researchers include social, political and cultural aspects into this contexts. (Alba-Juez, 2009)

Secondly, it has the potential to unite many different disciplines and fields and it carries the idea of having a broader view on things, rather than examining certain event only from the perspective of specific discipline (Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014).

Furthermore, it is not only bringing different disciplines together, but it also allows researchers to use various types of data (Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014). Even though discourse analysts have to work with texts in order to carry out their analysis (Alba-Juez, 2009), they do not have to limit their initial data to written language (Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014). That gives me the opportunity not to be strictly attached to written descriptions of the activities of selected organizations and allows me to engage in the dialogue with the respondents through the interview.

Hence, I chose this particular method of analysis in my research because it provides me with the opportunity to consider broad range of factors. Furthermore, discourse analysis as a research method is very new to me and I would like use this opportunity and learn this methods by applying it in my research.

Together with all the opportunities and advantages that the field of discourse analysis provides to its followers, it also brings certain obstacles, and the most difficult one is that there is no single definition or vision of *discourse* (Wodak, Maingueneau, Angermuller, 2014). Due to its versatility and the fact that it is being applied in many different fields, more specific aspects of discourse analysis can therefore be described in a variety of ways, depending on which dimension is being applied (Alba-Juez, 2009).

Marten Hajer (2005) defines discourse as an “ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena”. Thus, when interviewing experts I intend to see discourse through the practice of Finnish actors: what ideas they have about the role of each actor in dealing with online safety, which categories of stakeholders do they refer to within the discussion, which concepts do they use when referring to risks. Hajer also points out that in order to define discourse it has to be ‘produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices’. Through combining these ideas, concepts and categories mentioned by respondents

with the examination of certain activities carried out by the respondents' organizations, I am able to outline the meanings that they give to the phenomena of online safety. (Hajer, 2005)

Moving to my second research question, in addition to methods of discourse analysis I will also rely on the ideas of multi-stakeholder approach. DeNardis and Raymond (2013) suggest that in order for a multi-stakeholder process to be called such, there has to be at least two actors of different classes involved in the discussion. Based on their classification of actors they test how much Internet governance can be referred to as a multi-stakeholder process. In my turn, I will use this classification to see to which extent activities carried out by Finnish actors in the field of online safety issues can be viewed as performing a multi-stakeholder approach.

As for the empirical part of my study, in this research I will be relying on qualitative methods to collect and analyses the data. I am going to collect the data through conducting semi-structured expert interviews. Interviews in discourse studies differ from the rest of research areas. As Potter (2004) describes it, by conducting an interview discourse analysts are not quite interested in the information outside of the scene, instead they are creating a space for respondents to draw on 'discursive resources'. I will use this methods of collecting data to do both - extract the discourse created by respondents around the topic of online safety and get to know about their activities and cooperation with other actors. Furthermore, in contrast to other methods of qualitative research, e.g. participant observation or focus groups, interviewing will allow me to navigate the discussion in right direction and focus in more details of what each of the respondents has to say (Morgan, 1997).

### **3.3. Selecting respondents**

In order to have both of my research questions answered, I was looking for organizations and authorities that carry out activities in different fields of online safety. The nature of the issue is rather diverse, and so are the ways it can be dealt with. Based on the area and the scope of their activities, for the purpose of this thesis I selected the following seven institutions: National Audiovisual Institute, Mannerheim League of Child Welfare, Save the Children Finland, Microsoft, EU Kids Online Finland, National Board of Education, NettiPoliisi. However, in the process of reaching out for representatives of each of these institutions I encountered difficulties

with two latter ones and, consequently, interviews with representatives of NettiPoliisi and the National Board of Education did not take place. Perspectives of these institutions could be explored in the future research of this matter.

Hence, following five institutions were included in this study: National Audiovisual Institute, Mannerheim League of Child Welfare, Save the Children Finland, Microsoft, EU Kids Online Finland. These entities represent different groups of stakeholders - state, non-governmental organizations, private business and academia, respectfully. Below I provide a brief description of the role of each actor in the issue of online safety and explain why they were selected for this research.

First of all, it is important to mention that three of the abovementioned organizations - National Audiovisual Institute, Mannerheim League of Child Welfare and Save the Children Finland - together form the Finnish Safer Internet Center, which is responsible for raising awareness of online issues and promoting safer Internet usage among children and young people on the national level and supported by the European Commission (Safer Internet Day, 2016). Together they organize the Media Literacy Week and it is the main responsibility of the national Safer Internet Center. These organizations do not carry out any specific activities themselves during that week, but they rather bring together representatives of over 40 NGOs, state authorities and industries to develop and implement nationwide campaigns. In addition to that they also carry out other projects together. For instance, in the year 2013, recently before the interviews, they conducted seminars for schools' social workers and prepared video material about sexual education to be used for discussion in classrooms.

It is also important to indicate that I am not researching the Safer Internet Center as one entity but, on contrary, it is my intention to take advantage of the fact that it is composed of three different organizations and research their perspectives separately. Each organization has a specific role in the Center: National Audiovisual Institute are the awareness center; Mannerheim League of Child Welfare are the helpline; and Save the Children Finland are the hotline. This indicates that each of these organizations deal with the issue from a different perspective and therefore have their own



understanding of the matter. Furthermore, in addition to those activities carried out within Safer Internet Center, each organization has other activities also aimed at promoting online safety.

*National Audiovisual Institute (Finnish: Kansallinen audiovisuaalinen instituutti)*

As its main activity Institute deals with films and film-related materials in a variety of ways, however I am interested in another field of their work. In terms of online safety National Audiovisual Institute's main task is to promote media education, enhance children's media skills and develop safe media environment for children and young people. National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) does not work directly with children or youngsters, instead it relies on cooperation with other institutions and organizations to achieve its goals.

Apart from focusing on media education, KAVI oversees safer online and media environment by attributing age limit to movies and computer games and making sure that they are respected.

KAVI is subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which gives me ground to consider them as acting on behalf of the state and, therefore, in this thesis I am referring to them as an actor representing the state. For the future research of this topic would be great to include decision-making and policy-making authorities like Ministry of Culture and Education or the National Board of Education.

At the time interview was taken, the institute was under the name of Center for Media Education and Audiovisual Programmes, abbreviated as MEKU (Finnish: Mediakasvatus- ja kuvaohjelmakeskus). However, as of January, 1st, 2014 it has merged with the National Audiovisual Archive into National Audiovisual Institute. Even though I am using the new abbreviation for this institute throughout the text, direct quotations extracted from the interview will use the earlier abbreviation - MEKU.

*Mannerheim League of Child Welfare (Finnish: Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto)*

The Mannerheim League of Child Welfare (MLL) has been promoting wellbeing of children since 1920 and has grown into one of the largest child welfare organizations in Finland. It carries out various activities aimed at children, young people, parents and teachers mainly through partnership with its members and other organizations.

Within the Safer Internet Center MLL acts as a helpline navigating children, young people and their parents in the world of the Internet. Trained adults can answer questions and give their advice over the phone, through e-mail or in a chat.

According to the report of the EU Kids Online research (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012) peer support system in Finland is very developed operating in more than 90 per cent of secondary schools of the country, and MLL contributes to that significantly. With over 12 000 peer students across the country MLL successfully mediates activities arranged by these students in order to help their peers or younger pupils with different issues, including matters related to online safety. Among other European countries, Finland has the highest percentage of children who say that their peers helped them with something online (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012). MLL provides training and guidance for these peer students. Peer students work voluntary and strengthen school community and help other students.

Also MLL develops materials that guide teachers and parents in their media use.

*Save the Children Finland (Finnish: Pelastakaa Lapset)*

Save the Children is an international NGO working for children, aiming to protect and advocate their rights. Organization consists of 30 member organizations, including Finland, carrying out activities in 120 countries worldwide. Finnish chapter of the NGO was founded in 1922.

Within Safer Internet Center Save the Children Finland is in the role of hotline, being a part of pan-European INHOPE network. The main focus of their work as a hotline is to tackle the problem

of child sexual abuse content on the Internet. Through the hotline people can anonymously report suspicious or illegal material.

Together with that, Save the Children Finland carries out several projects to improve children's digital skills. Their main focus is being visible for children who may encounter certain types of risks online, like cyber bullying, or inappropriate content, providing them with possibility to report this kind of activities and get necessary advice from adults or peers.

Advocacy is another important direction of their work, because in terms of illegal content, child sexual abuse materials in particular, legislation is not always comprehensive enough to provide protection of children's rights (Wei, 2011).

### *Microsoft*

Private business has also been recognized as one of the stakeholders in children's online safety. Industries shape online environment from various perspectives: from Internet operators to gadget developers. In its work Microsoft combines a lot of these perspectives. It develops technology to access Internet, to play digital games, provides platforms for communicating through messages and videos, for exchanging and sharing files, as well as offers a wide range of software to work with documents, pictures, videos and other data. With this in mind, large corporations, such as Microsoft, have to be aware of the responsibility they carry. The way they design their products - how they set default settings of privacy, or the tools they provide to block or restrict unwanted content, or ease of reporting a problem - can all impact children's online experiences and their exposure to risks.

Apart from these 'embedded' responsibilities there are also general policy directions that company chooses to take. In this respect, Microsoft has a strong emphasis on development of education and teaching. Through the Partners in Learning Program representatives of Microsoft are reaching out for children and teachers providing them their perspective on technology and Internet usage. This program is called to introduce technology into traditional education, empowering teachers to use more innovative approaches in their classrooms and providing children with the digital skills

needed in the modern world of technology. Along with that Microsoft is working closely with policymakers all over the world to facilitate educational transformation.

### *EU Kids Online Finland*

Representatives of academia are less often mentioned among stakeholder, however they are not least important. In this research I am analyzing the vision of one of researchers of the EU Kids Online project. This project is the first and the only, so far, cross-national comparative research of children's online habits carried out in this scale. Main part of the research is funded by the European Commission. However, due to the fact that Finland joined the project after it has already started, Finnish part of the research was funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Transport and Communication.

The project consisted of three waves: the first one was 'thematic network', involving 21 countries and aiming to collect research perspectives on the topic of Internet Safety, as well as to create publicly available database of this research, find gaps in existing research and provide recommendations for the future research; the second, 'knowledge enhancement' wave included 25 countries and was called to produce new findings and explain the issue more precisely; third and final wave was concentrated on collecting research on the usage of new media and it was carried out in 33 countries. To read more about the methodologies and findings of this project, please go to the website of the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science.

## **3.4. Collecting and analyzing data**

A general frame for semi-structured interviews was developed and each questionnaire was customized separately during each interview. Interviews were held in a conversational manner. Because the semi-structured interview was used as a method for collecting data, it was not supposed to have a strict frame and follow the sequence of questions asked. During the interviews I collected data covering the following topics: information about organization/institution and its activities in general; activities aimed at online safety; cooperation with other organizations/institutions; reflection on this cooperation. Following the stages of rapport between

interviewee and interviewer: apprehension, exploration, co-operation and participation (DiCicco-Bloom, Crabtree, 2006), interviews also included other topics. For instance, to get the conversation going in the beginning of each interview I asked the respondents to tell a little bit about themselves and what do they do.

Respondents were invited to participate in face-to-face interviews by e-mail. They were offered to select a suitable timing for them, as well as a place. For this reason interviews took place in different settings: two of them were held in office or meeting room of the respondent's working place, while three others were held in cafeterias suggested by the respondent.

Additionally, a consent form was prepared for and signed by each interviewee prior to the interview. It consisted of the following information: introduction to the general idea of the research, brief description of the research methodology, information about handling collected data, permission to use collected data in the future research, and statement allowing to use full names and positions of respondents in this thesis. Respondents were also given an option to choose not to share their full names, by signing a slightly different consent form.

Audio recording was chosen over the video recording because my research interest does not focus neither on body language of my respondents nor on other factors that might be otherwise be important for analysis. Hence, each interview was recorded via digital voice recorder. After conducting each of the interviews recordings were placed to the password protected folder on my personal computer.

English was chosen to be the language of communication during data collection stage, considering that I am not speaking Finnish well enough to carry out a conversation with confidence. Prior to the interview the matter of the language was discussed and all respondents expressed confidence speaking English and answering my questions in English during the interview. However I understand that the data could have been richer if the respondents could use their mother tongue.

After having collected the data and prior to starting the analysis it is necessary to prepare the data by transcribing the speech into text. Taking into account that discourse analysis, in many cases,

takes into consideration plenty of various factors other than speech, transcription process may significantly vary for each research. Methods, systems, tools and levels of transcription may be different depending on the interest of study. While some researchers might be interested in highly detailed transcripts, including various conversational aspects, such as: pauses made by respondents, changes of intonation, illustrating accents and phonetic peculiarities of the speech; others are satisfied with more simple form of transcribed speech (Potter, 2004). I am not interested in grammatical aspects of the respondents' speech or conversational issues, but rather in the wording they choose to talk about specific phenomenon. Therefore, a simple transcription satisfied my research needs.

Being aware of how demanding and time consuming the process of transcription may be (Gibbs, 2007), conscious decision was made not to outsource this task to a third party, with the intention to give myself a chance to focus deeply on the content of each interview. This allowed me to listen through the data very carefully and I believe it contributed a lot to the quality of the analysis.

The interviews were transcribed, with all the relevant metadata added. Using these transcriptions I proceed to the coding stage of analysis, keeping in mind that in discourse analysis coding is often seen not as a separate stage, but more as a continuous process lasting until the very last word of the paper is written (Potter, 2004). There are two main topics that I intend to cover in this study: the way Finnish actors see and talk about the issues related to Internet safety for children; which other actors are mentioned by the respondents and how do they cooperate with each other.

First of all, I would like to understand the discourse around online safety among Finnish actors. Therefore, I created a category that would help me see the perspective of each respondent on the issue. I navigated myself through the data by finding the answers to the following questions: which meanings and concepts do respondents construct when they talk about internet safety? which terms do they use (online safety, digital skills)? what is the way they talk about online safety, how do they describe what they mean? At the same time this gives me an opportunity to compare how these perspectives differ depending on the actor and furthermore, how are they different from the global discourse and practices.

All the interviews were carefully read and examined for the patterns containing information regarding this category. All the relevant pieces were extracted for further processing. After having selected the parts of my interest, I have carefully read through the interviews and noticed certain patterns and thematic intersections. Therefore, I have divided the data into the following subtopics:

- vision of online safety issues as part of media literacy/media education
- expanded context - more diverse risks
- risks *versus* opportunities
- changing media habits

These subtopics helped me structure different perspectives of my respondents and describe the differences in more details. Throughout the interviews respondents voiced their understanding of the topic, by using specific wording and phrasing they contribute to creating the meaning of what they speak of. Because these patterns were a common feature of all the interviews together they create a distinct discourse around online risks.

Secondly, I was interested to see which other actors, which are involved in the issue of online safety, were mentioned by our interviewees. Correspondingly, I selected ‘other actors’ as the next category. Here I was interested to capture whenever respondents mention other actors involved in the issue, identifying new actors, the ones that haven’t been mentioned earlier or by other actors and also comparing which actors does each respondent talk about. These questions helped me navigate through the text: who do respondents mention as other actors? are those actors local or international? do respondents name specific organizations or do they speak of general categories of stakeholders? I have examined the data to find the answers to the questions above and collected all the information about other actors for the further analysis. All the mentioned actors were grouped and displayed graphically in one picture, with connections to our main stakeholders.

Finally, as a continuation of my second research question, I wanted to see the way these actors cooperate with each other. For that reason I created a category called ‘cooperation’. With this category I am trying to find the answer to the following questions: what do respondents say about their cooperation with other actors? do they give some evaluation to their cooperation? how do they describe it? do they mention the need for cooperation or do they mainly focus on the actions

needed to be undertaken by their organization? Keeping these questions in mind I followed the same steps as I did with the previous two categories: I looked for any mentioning of what was named ‘cooperation’ within the text of each interview and proceeded with further analysis of extracted data. Among the main points of my interest I have outlined several ways in which these actors tend to cooperate with each other.

- discussion
- joint actions
- direct and indirect funding

Respondents have mentioned a great number of stakeholders involved in the issue of online safety, however ‘cooperation’ category covered only those, cooperation with which was described in more details by the respondents. I described only the cooperation mentioned most. Firstly, because I have enough information from them to describe this cooperation. And secondly, because this cooperation seems to be of a special importance to the respondents, since they choose to focus their attention on the specific issue.

In the final section I have a look at whether or not the cooperation between these actors can be characterized as multi-stakeholder. Taking into account the definition of multi-stakeholder process provided by DeNardis and Raymond (2013) I examined the process of cooperation between actors.



## 4. ONLINE SAFETY AS A COMPONENT OF MEDIA EDUCATION

This chapter is called to unfold the discourse around online safety among Finnish respondents. Selection of interviewed stakeholders includes representatives of various spheres and organizations. Each of the actors is dealing with the issue of online safety from his or her own perspective. These perspectives vary depending on a number of different factors, such as focus of their work, target audience, mission of the organization, etc. Hence, in order to understand perspectives of interviewed actors I try to answer these questions: which specific aspect of online safety the actor is dealing (working) with; which risks and issues do they mention; how do they speak of online safety?

According to the Net Children Go Mobile research most common risks, among others, are the following ones: cyberbullying, sexting, meeting new people, sexual images and other inappropriate content (Mascheroni, Ólafsson, 2014). These risks are also mentioned and discussed by Finnish experts throughout the interviews.

Regardless of the specific aspect of online safety, which respondents deal with, they all tend to bring up the same risks. Most commonly experts mentioned the following ones: cyberbullying, sexual abuse, harmful or illegal content, privacy. According to EU Kids Online research (Livingstone, 2011) these risks were among the most common ones as reported by children too. Apart from that experts also mentioned the following risks: sexting, online porn, sexuality online, sexual images, sexual harassment, trafficking, online youth issues, harmful online contacts, loneliness, excessive gaming, illegal material.

Naturally, hotline representative, due to the focus of her work, spoke mainly of sexual harassment and sexual crimes against children. However, sexuality online, as well as online porn, were often in the focus of discussion by private sector, NGOs and government office representatives.

Even though the same issues and risks were discussed during the interviews, there is a rather big difference in how online safety is discussed in Finland when compared to the global perspective. Let us have a closer look at this difference.

## **4.1. Media education: broader vision of online safety**

In the international discourse there is an ongoing discussion about online safety for children. Various organizations and actors draw attention to the risks that children might face on the Internet most commonly referring to this issue as *online safety*. It can be seen from numerous research and publication titles discussing the matter, as well as from the event names organized in this sphere, for instance: Safer Internet Day, Safer Internet Forum, Safer Internet Center, The Safer Network, etc.

However, when discussing the same issues with our Finnish actors I can clearly see that they tend to speak of ‘online safety’ as a component of broader phenomenon - ‘media literacy’, without separating these two concepts. This difference has a huge impact on the discourse around online safety in general and this vision is shared by all the interviewed experts, regardless of whether it is a state, NGO, academia or industry representative.

As it was mentioned earlier, Finnish Safer Internet Center is a project carried out by three different organizations - a government office and two NGOs. Apart from carrying out common activities, Safer Internet Center serves as a floor for discussion and exchange between these actors. This cooperation gives room to each involved party for seeing same issues from different perspectives, at the same time constructing common discourse around the topic. Thus, the vision and necessity to include online safety in a wider context is also shared by all three partners of the Finnish Safer Internet Center.

In Finland online safety was previously viewed as a separate, independent field, but eventually it was combined with broader field of media literacy. The need to integrate online safety in media education emerged several years ago, due to the fact that it was becoming difficult to see these issues as separate things. People usually use media as a tool to go online, but at the same time, when using various kinds of media people, and especially children, do not always pay attention to whether it is online media or offline media. Overall, Finnish state takes a rather proactive stand in shaping the discourse around the topic.

*“As the government office our legal task is to promote media education and safe media environment for children, it is actually written in the law [...]. We thought that it makes no point to talk about online safety and media literacy separately because they are more and more the same thing. At least the smallest children can’t even distinguish is it online or isn’t it online. It’s only media for them. [...] So we only talk about media literacy and media skills, not online safety. But the same issues are still there. Like cyberbullying, privacy, sexting. We still talk about these issues, but we call it media literacy.”*

*National Audiovisual Institute*

This vision is also shared by the representatives of academia. Viewing online safety issues from the perspective of Finnish research, media literacy is used much more frequently, as well as the term media education.

At the same time the discussion is taken even further by the representative of an NGO, when he mentions that media education itself should not be viewed strictly from the perspective of formal education, but instead it should be a consistent part of wider approaches. It is thought that media education is not really possible as a separate subject and should not just be integrated into other subjects, but also go beyond the frames of traditional education as we know it and become a part of more complex processes of democratic society.

*“When you think this from the child’s point of view they are born inside the media society. There is no difference between media education and education, or online life and offline life. [...] I think that in order for the media education to succeed it should be part of wider approaches of education and democratic society, it doesn’t survive as a separate subject. Because it’s so wide.”*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

He also stresses that it is important to understand that life continues online. Social problems are closely interlinked with media use. For instance, excessive gaming may result in loneliness, or vice versa low self-esteem and social isolation may lead to excessive gaming (Lemmens, Valkenburg, and Peter, 2011). Some risks go beyond online environment more physically, while others may have mostly psychological impact. Meeting an online contact in real life may result not only in psychological stress, but in some cases may also cause physical harm. The helpline representative

uses terms *online life* and *media life* not trying to separate it from *life* in general, but more to stress on the new dimension of it.

*“It’s an ongoing work to train the volunteer counsellors to support children with their media life or online life, it’s not a separate thing, but it’s important for adults to understand the meanings and the contexts where their children live.”*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

The use of different concepts - online safety and media literacy - is also reflected on the way safer Internet activities are organized in the country. For example, as it was previously mentioned, KAVI is one of three organizations that form Finnish Safer Internet Center. These Centers are present in every European country. One of the main and biggest activities of every Safer Internet Center is the Safer Internet Day, usually held in February each year since 2004 (Safer Internet Day, 2016). For Safer Internet Centers in other countries this event is one of the main focuses of their work, while in Finland Safer Internet Day became a constituent part of the Media Literacy Week (Mediataitoviikko in Finnish). Therefore, activities within this event cover many more topics and issues. As it was mentioned by the respondents one of the main goals that the Finnish Safer Internet Center is trying to achieve is to bring together as many actors as they can to find most effective ways to work.

By referring to online safety as media education we should pay attention that it is not only *media* that changes in the discussion appearing instead of the term *online*. *Safety* is also something that is substituted with another concept - *education*.

*“Safety is not the core of our approach. It is more provision, empowerment, education.”*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

Along with that when speaking of *media education* the discussion is not limited to just *education*. However, it is not only the formal education that experts refer to. Apart from lessons for children in school, education also takes other forms - it includes lessons for teachers, school social workers, etc. Along with that it educates wider public in many other ways. For instance, through material for maternity clinics that include information about parents’ media use and how it can be reflected

on children. This way NGOs are trying to implement the mission of including media education in parenting.

*“We do not provide the maternity clinics with special material about children’s media. We do that as well, but when you read the basic things how can you handle a 0 year old baby, what do you do when you get a child, so we have included those advices or things to consider about parents’ media habits and then children’s media use into those.”*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

Respondents speak of online safety in a much larger scope referring to the same issues but using terms *media literacy* and *media education* instead of *online safety*. Consequently, instead of *online* environment, as I used to refer to it previously, experts are viewing the same issues as *media* environment, which expands the issues that organizations have to deal with, as well as broadens the list of actors involved.

## **4.2. Expanded context generates more diverse risks**

Shifting the discussion from *online safety* to *media literacy* gives completely new volume and scope to the issues in focus. This shift expands the frames of the context, covering broader set of issues in much broader way. It expands the understanding of risks themselves as well as sources of potentially harmful content.

For instance, experts illustrate the broadness of the media literacy concept by including in it not just online media, but also more traditional ones, like television, radio and magazines.

Age limits for movies and digital games is one of the issues brought up by the expert from the National Audiovisual Institute. Nowadays it is not necessary to have a traditional TV-set at home in order to be able to watch television. One can access different programs and TV-shows from nearly any device that allows to go online. Therefore, it is highly important to have same rules applied to the same content in different settings. Thus, one of the tasks of KAVI is to contribute to establishing age limits for movies and games, assuring that children are less exposed to inappropriate content. In this way they make sure that media environment is suitable for all ages and reduce the influence of harmful content.

*“We don’t give age limits to movies and digital games, but we have people who monitor that the age limits are correct. And they train all those people who classify films and TV-shows. [...] That’s also how we make the media environment safe for kids. That movies have age limits. The purpose of it is to make safe and to protect kids from harmful content.”*

*National Audiovisual Institute*

Another important aspect brought up in discussion by the private sector representative is the legal perspective. Even though Internet has been constructed as open space, free for sharing information, legal responsibilities still apply to all participants of the web. What is illegal in the real world is also illegal online. However, the ability to commit crimes anonymously allows criminals to avoid responsibility. Because of the Internet’s transborder nature, even if the source of crime is known, it might be difficult to bring the offender to justice, because he is located in a different country, where due to the difference in legislation his actions are not considered illegal.

*“[...] those things that are crimes in the real world they also are crimes on the Internet. Even though, you probably won’t get caught that easily. For example if you steal a CD in the store, everybody knows that it is a crime. But if you download illegal music, probably nobody will ever find out, but still it’s a crime. [...] I think it’s important to discuss it also from the legal perspective.”*

*Microsoft*

Another example is given by the representative of Save the Children Finland. One of the things mentioned in the context of their online risks prevention activity is the fears that children might get from media and which are dealt with in their program for preparedness for crisis situations. The core of this activity is an information and support chat, which is opened whenever there is disturbing real life situation involving children, for example, school shooting, or tsunami, or another kind of accident. Children and young people can use this chat to deal with the fears they get from media, including TV, newspapers, and Facebook discussions. First of all, this shows that, as well as previous respondents, in terms of online safety hotline representative speaks of a broader media environment rather than solely online environment. Together with that it opens up brand new way of looking at risks and understanding them. One cannot really speak of this kind of information as of harmful content, because media is simply delivering the information about what has happened in the world and in its turn it provokes a lot of discussions, including the ones that

take place online. But at the same time it doesn't mean that it cannot harm children in one way or another, unless it is dealt with correspondingly.

### **4.3. Risks vs. opportunities**

Finnish experts tend to view online safety more as a part of media education, rather than separate phenomena. However, this is not the only thing that stands out when comparing Finnish discourse to the international one. Most of the Finnish experts instead of risks and dangers focus their attention more on opportunities and positive sides of the Internet, as well as media in general.

Finnish scholars seem to be more interested in possibilities and participation on the Internet and not so much in the risks themselves. From perspective of the interviewed research expert in his future work he would rather focus on the opportunities of the Internet than on the risks that it may bring.

*"[...] we [researchers] are not so much interested in risks, but we are more interested in some kind of participation and possibilities of the Internet. Of course, I understand that the question about the risks is important. But if we start maybe, some day, new research the focus will be more on opportunities on the Internet."*

*EU Kids Online Finland*

Without a doubt the matter of safety and exposure to risks remains very important. There are various ways to influence children's Internet usage by applying technical solutions. Parents or schools have different tools to monitor, guide or even restrict the usage of the Internet by children. However, the most important factor that defines what kind of experience children will have while surfing the web is their own behavior. The most effective way to keep children safe online is to teach them think about their own actions online.

*"There are certain activities that we can do to monitor, to restrict, to, sort of, guide the usage of children. We can, for example, decide that these are only the websites you can visit or this is the timeframe when you can use the computer and that kind of things. So these technical things are one and the other one which is most important is behavior. What you do there is actually the biggest risk or advantage. The other one is the operating system level, technical solutions and then there is this sort of educating to think about what you are doing online."*

Furthermore, there is a need to develop not only children's digital literacy skills, but also to focus on their digital citizenship skills, which would help them manage their digital lives in a more efficient manner (O'Neill, 2012). Empowering children's positive online experiences and helping them build a positive online community is thought to be effective by NGOs as well as private sector and academia. In the peer support program implemented by MLL, apart from teaching youngsters how to talk about online issues and how to deal with the problems they face online, a lot of attention is also given to support and development of positive online community. Instead of having to deal with the risks, peers are taught to rather put their effort in preventing them.

*"This is our vision, our approach and we have those peer supporters in schools that want to support the positive community, so we train them to have a positive online community, because school community continues online, so we train them. We don't train different media scouts, but we use the same program for media education."*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

Activities carried out by the state office have a strong emphasis on promoting media skills and media education. This indicates that direction of the national policy is not just to create safe online environment for children, but also to provide them with necessary skills and knowledge to be able to safely navigate in this environment. These skills and knowledge are believed to allow children get maximum benefits from the Internet without having their access restricted.

#### **4.4. Changing media habits**

The way online safety is viewed and discussed is constantly changing. However it is not the only thing that is altering. Children's habits are also changing rapidly. As both research and empirical evidence show, the age kids go online and use various devices for the first time is dropping (Mascheroni, Ólafsson, 2014), together with widening of the variety of devices they use, as technological progress moving forward.

Interviewed academia expert includes the changeability of the Internet into discussion. He points out appearance of new devices, allowing new kinds of ways in which children interact or



participate on the Internet. Some years ago it was much easier for parents to keep track of their kids' online activities - one of the most effective measures was to put stationery computer in the living room or any other shared space in the house. This allowed parents to monitor the time their children spent online as well as the activities they were into. However, with appearance of laptops and handheld devices with Internet access it became almost impossible for parents to keep track of children's Internet usage, unless there is a developed dialogue culture in the family.

*“As we noticed that the whole area of media environment is changing so rapidly that we need the research almost every year, so we can say what changes there have been. [...] as we have seen for example in the last study that the mobile media is something that we didn't see for example four three years ago. It is something quite new kind of phenomenon that children go online using their mobile phones. And they use apps, that there were no such kinds of apps or environments like this four years ago. [...] And also children and young people are more and more doing communication by visual media and not so much maybe writing, not what has been before. So there are a lot of changes.”*

*EU Kids Online Finland*

Media environment has changed a lot, even comparing to couple of years back. New devices, new software and applications, new ways of engagement. Research shows that the pace of this development has been so fast, that many parents and educators are not even familiar with devices children tend to use. Activities that children tend to do online have also been changing along with the devices they use (Kupiainen, Suoninen, Nikunen, 2011).

Apart from the changes in the way children are engaged in the Internet usage there are also changes in the age they start going online and using various media devices. According to Children's Media Barometer research, held in 2010, Internet use among Finnish children usually begins at the age of 4 or 5, when at least half of children go online occasionally. One-third of children between the ages of 0 and 8 use the Internet at least once a week and 44 per cent of children in this age group were allowed to use the Internet at home (Kupiainen, Suoninen, Nikunen, 2011). More recent research shows that children go online at ever younger ages and this tendency is common for all the European countries (Mascheroni, Ólafsson, 2014).

*“I have to say that when I started this, I think 6 years ago I started to work as volunteer, I think then 3rd graders started to have mobile phones, not before that. So there wasn't using Internet. Now they have tablets when they are two years old.”*

*Microsoft*

## **4.5. Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of discourse among interviewed experts around the main topic of this thesis - online safety. One of the key findings presented in this chapter is that instead of *online safety* experts tend to refer to the same issues using the term *media literacy* or *media education*.

This brings a lot in terms of what is seen as a risk and consequently which would be the proper measures to deal with them. Hence, it also impacts the way (or the kind of) activities are carried out in this field and which actors should be involved.

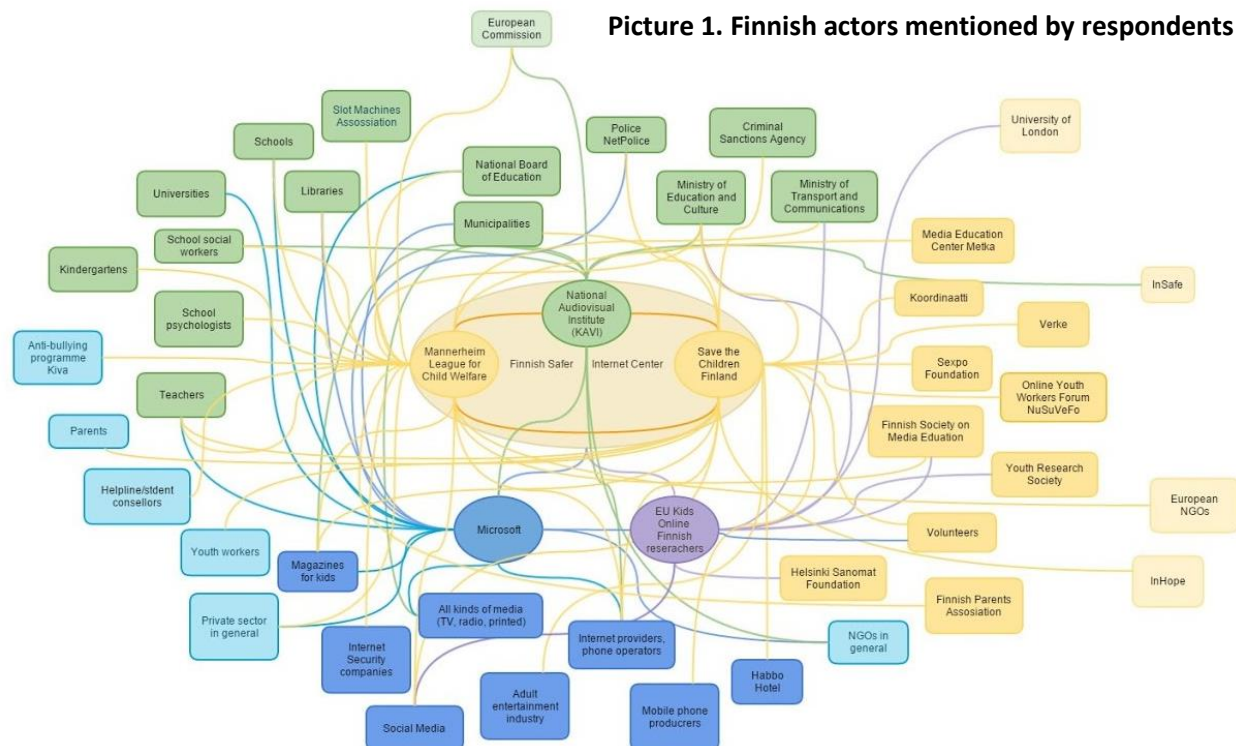
Another important finding is that these views are shared among the actors, they all are talking about the same thing, making emphasis on media education instead of online risks. At the same time respondents tend to focus more on opportunities of the Internet rather than the risks.

One of the challenges that modern policy makers are facing lays in the changing nature of media environment. Along with it children's media habits are changing as well.

## 5. ACTORS AND COOPERATION

This chapter provides an overview of the actors involved in dealing with the issue of online safety and gives the description of the ways they cooperate with each other. It is important to keep in mind that Finnish experts tend to speak of online safety as of a broader concept - media education. This concept covers same issues, but at the same time it expands the list of potential stakeholders and involved parties.

Throughout the discussion there is a mutual understanding among the actors that media literacy is a shared responsibility of multiple stakeholders, it involves many different partners because the issues covered are so broad and integrated within each other. Cooperation is an important component of the work of each selected institution and it is given much attention to. The need for cooperation and its tremendous benefits were mentioned and discussed by every interviewed expert. The list of partners that interviewed actors cooperate with is rather large, and so is the amount of ways they cooperate in. In the picture below I illustrate the actors that respondents mentioned during the interviews. The actors are grouped according to the class of stakeholders they represent. The links between them illustrate the connection to the respondent, who mentioned the specific actor.



## 5.1. Ways of cooperation and interaction

Taking into account the variety of actors, mentioned by the respondents during interviews, and the diversity of their professional orientations, there is an endless amount of ways these actors can cooperate and help each other in their work. Among actors involved in the field media education there are various governmental offices, public institutions, non-governmental organizations, industries, private companies, research bodies and so on. All of them have their own mission, tasks, goals, priorities and each of them relate to the issue in their own way. Therefore the variety of ways they can and they do cooperate is beyond limitations. Let's have a closer look at the ways these actors tend to cooperate with each other and how do they benefit from this particular cooperation.

When analyzing the data it was thought to be most appropriate to categorize the ways of cooperation into following: discussion, joint actions and funding.

### *a) Discussion*

It was previously stated that discussion plays a very important role in the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance. Internet Governance Forum emerged out of the idea that there is a need for some kind of platform to bring different stakeholders together in a common discussion. The idea was not just to let people from different fields achieve compromise, but more to allow them exchange their views and share their visions of the future of the Internet. (Kleinwächter, 2007)

Discussion is named as one of the most common and spread ways of cooperation among interviewed experts as well. Most commonly it takes place during various conferences and seminars. People interested in online safety issues come together to discuss different achievements and trends in this sphere. This way of cooperation is a good illustration of how researchers usually work together - being involved in face to face conversations. Some of these conferences and seminars are gathering not only researchers, but also representatives of those organizations which carry out practical work in this field. Researchers share their findings with NGOs, state authorities and society, while those in return share their insights with researchers. In this way each party keeps their knowledge up to date about recent developments and trends in media education. This kind of

discussion involving various actors is seen as special national feature by the interviewed research expert.

*“As I mentioned, one place to share information is seminars and conferences. I do not mean only the researchers conferences, but conferences where people who do practical work meet the researchers. This is, I think the national way of how we do it”*

*EU Kids Online Finland*

For academia discussion is not only carried out through conferences and seminars, which are indeed one of the most effective ways to exchange the knowledge. Discussion also spreads to writing articles, publishing findings in various journals and spreading information in all possible ways. Other actors, including NGOs and private sector, mention that they try to keep up with the latest research, comparing studies and analyzing what is happening in the field.

Discussion is seen as a rather important tool not only to share the results of research, but also to shape the future work and plan upcoming challenges and difficulties. In addition to conferences and seminars that were already mentioned, local meetings also provide a good floor for discussion. For instance, Save the Children Finland closely cooperates with the network of youth workers NuSuVeFo in the form of continuous discussion on various issues. This helps all the parties involved to reflect on their work as well as to see forward and shape their activities.

*“Within that network [NuSuVeFo] we also discussed a lot of legislation issues, the sort of upcoming issues with youth. Yeah, whatever issue there is at the moment, or in what platform the kids are at the moment, and how we should develop our own ways of working”*

*Save the Children Finland*

Safer Internet Center is another good example of effective interaction between actors and how they discover new directions for their work by discussing the issue and viewing it from different perspective. Partners of the Center have rather different directions of their work and it may seem rather difficult for them to find common activities. However, due to ongoing discussion and sharing of their experiences, they manage to find more and more points of intersections making maximum use of their cooperation. With the help of communication and simply by discussing the

topic from various perspectives each organization can make improvements in their own work. For example, KAVI, as an awareness center, are developing new materials on sexuality online and online porn for their youngsters due to the insight from the helpline. They also mention that it is rather beneficial just to hear about the phenomenon from the perspective of their partners.

*“We have found some things we can do together as well and of course it is very beneficial just to hear about phenomenon in our meetings.”*

*National Audiovisual Institute*

Discussion brings together researchers, various non-governmental organizations and state authorities. As we can see, discussing the same issue from the perspective of different organizations can play a rather important role in the way the issue is dealt with, consequently influencing the actions that are undertaken. This leads me to the next section.

#### *b) Joint actions*

Another important and widely spread way of cooperation between actors is joint actions.

Cooperation within Safer Internet Center is one of most evident examples of various organizations taking joint actions in order to tackle same issues. This can be seen through the way the three partner organizations carry out their activities together within the project. Initially, each organization in the project has its own role and responsibilities. However, after discussing the issues each of them have to deal with in their work, they came up with a joint project which seemed to be of a great success.

*“We just organized a common training for school social workers. And we’re building a new project out of that because it was so well received, got so much positive feedback.”*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

At the same time Finnish Safer Internet Center put their effort in bringing together various NGOs, industry and state offices to cooperate during the Media Literacy Week. One of the ways that these organizations work together is through working groups. There are around forty organizations participating in Media Literacy Week each year and they are divided into five or six working

groups. Each working group has a nationwide campaign or an event that they design, develop and carry out by themselves.

Apart from carrying out these campaigns together with other organizations, institutions and companies, they are also encouraged to carry out their own projects. In this way, the topic of online safety can get much more attention and coverage all over the country.

State offices are also involved in taking joint actions. For example, National Board of Education is closely cooperating with NGOs and private sector to implement different actions. Together with the MLL, the National Police Board, Folkhälsan and the Finnish Parents' League, National Board of Education is the part of the School Peace program, announced in Finnish schools every year and promoting friendship, respect and no bullying. This program is carried out by joint actions of NGOs, government and public institutions.

At the same time National Board of Education is cooperating with private sector in order to develop improved curriculum which would include the usage of media tools and new technologies. New tools based on technologies are going to be embedded into the school program starting with the new academic year 2016.

In the context of taking media education out of formal education and integrating it into wider field I should mention another form of cooperation between NGOs and public institutions. It was previously discussed that media education, and online safety in particular, is not only about what happens in online media environment. Risks and opportunities mostly arise depending on what we do and how we use this environment. And families usually play one of the most significant roles in setting the usage habits and patterns. In order for parents to understand their role, MLL comes up with new partners and actors by including media usage habits to the material for parents that is distributed by maternity clinics (called Neuvola in Finnish), including media education in parenting. According to Finnish practice, when the child is born parents are provided with basic guidance on how to handle the baby, including recommendations about baby's nutrition, bathing, as well as how to make home safe for the growing baby and which areas to pay extra attention to.

Nowadays, parents' media habits also deserve to be among the topics for this guidance, because they influence children's development a lot and maybe not all the families realize that.

Municipalities play a significant role in helping NGOs carry out their mission. For example, Save the Children are cooperating with different municipalities all over Finland who provide their youth workers to give online counselling for kids.

Interesting thing is that this online counselling and support of children is happening on the base of a Finnish social platform called Habbo Hotelli. An online platform where children can play and socialize. Children hang out there and they know that discussion there is controlled/supervised by adults, therefore it is respectful and bullying free. This platform is owned by a private business. Youth workers hired by different municipalities, trained and supported by an NGO, provide online support to children via networking platform owned by a private business. This cooperation includes NGO, municipalities and private sector.

*“And then all sort of social network platforms, Facebook, Youtube. We basically do our work within cooperational platforms. For example, Habbo Hotelli is owned by Elisa, without that cooperation we wouldn't be able to do our work there.”*

*Save the Children Finland*

The role of private sector is bigger than one might think. Because these are private companies who provide access to the Internet; who develop devices and software to go online; who create applications and platforms for gaming, socializing and other forms of engagement. According to the interviewed experts, a lot of these companies understand their role and the responsibility in creating safe online environment for children. This includes the adult entertainment industry. They cooperate with the hotline, helping them reduce illegal or harmful content and detect offenders.

Having developed new tools that could be used in schools software company representatives go to schools to tell about these tools. Together with presenting new technologies, safety tips and advices are given to teachers and students. But the cooperation between schools and private sector is not limited only by presentations of new tools and technologies. Software company representative is also invited to schools as a volunteering 'online doctor' to give lectures for kids, parents and



teachers about the ways they can use technology and benefit from it, staying safe and acting wisely. This is the way private sector works together with public institutions taking joint actions in media education.

*“The most successful events or types of the events are that we have sort of Media skills day. So that during the day I will meet all the students, have lessons to them about online safety or internet safety. Then in the afternoon I have training for the teachers and then in the evening to the parents.”*

*Microsoft*

One of the ways that state cooperates with private sector is through police. Police is invited to participate in the lectures given by the Microsoft expert to tell children and parents about the legal aspects online. In Finland Police is carrying out an interesting initiative called NetPolice. Officers have their profiles in various networking platforms, keeping an eye on online environment and at the same time making it easier to keep in touch with offline offenders or youth at risk.

NGOs are also in close cooperation with police. For example, hotline passes information about illegal content online to police.

Naturally, NGOs cooperate with other NGOs and associations. For instance, hotline works together with organizations that deal with sexual offenders, providing help materials for those offenders who are interested in children, trying to prevent the crimes. At the same time MLL is cooperating closely with the Finnish Parents association, carrying out projects aimed at families with children.

By carrying out activities together with other actors, organizations and institutions enlarge their capacity and they are able to impact much more audience, when compared to relying on their individual efforts.

*c) Direct and indirect funding*

Being involved in solving the issue of online safety for children through providing direct funding is mostly common for government. There is a large variety of ways in which Finnish government collects and distributes the money.

For example, funding for most of the countries that took part in the EU Kids Online research was provided by the European Commission. Taking into account that Finland was not among the participant countries from the beginning and joined the project a bit later, Finnish part of the EU Kids Online research had to look for their funding on their own and the funding was granted by the Ministry of Culture and Education and Ministry of Transport and Communication. Another study carried out in Finland about the online habits of children in Finland - Media Barometer - and mentioned by our research expert was also funded by the Ministry of Culture and Education. Ministries provide funding for research and in return they get up to date information about the issue. This information is used for decision making and policy shaping purposes.

*“I think it is quite important for some kind of policy settings what has been done at the moment. It has been used in several contexts when there has been some questions and discussion about online safety. [...] I have seen that it has been referred to in different kinds of reports. And for example, when the Ministry of Culture and Education has published some reports about media education and future media literacy they have used our reports.”*

*EU Kids Online Finland*

Funding coming directly from the state budget is not the only way that Finnish government provides support to activities aimed at creating a better media environment. The state of Finland developed an interesting mechanism for collecting money that are forwarded to support various NGOs: all the slot machines in the country belong to the state and all the profit collected through those machines is forwarded to the benefit of society, as various NGOs can apply for these money. In this way a lot of projects organized by MLL are financed with this money.

*“It’s a Finnish system, it’s a monopoly. They gather the money and they share it with NGOs and with welfare work. So there are maybe thousands of NGOs working with slot machines’*

*association money. [...] There are different project we apply from the association. It's more or less government money, it's a government monopoly and their way to give up these money."*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

When speaking of funding by the state there is more to it than simply providing direct financial support to activities of a certain kind. One should also keep in mind indirect benefits. I mentioned earlier that NGOs and private sector cooperate closely with municipalities and police taking joint actions for the mutual good. Nevertheless, apart from actions taken jointly, each actor also has his own responsibilities. For instance, from the perspective of the hotline, organized by Save the Children, whenever they get a report about sexual related crimes they pass it on to police, who take up the case for further investigation. And this is when lack of finances may become an obstacle. Because of the limited resources, they have to prioritize the issues they are dealing with and for some reason child sexual abuse issues are not in the top of the list. Police is just so overloaded with other crime reports that they are simply not able to solve all of them as efficiently as they would wish to due to the lack of resources.

*"And at this particular time as well, when you look at the municipalities, because they are really limited when it comes to finances. Things are not really going in the right direction, because basically everything comes down to finances. I guess there are so many priorities, you just can't deal with them all. And when there is specific units within the police that deal with all IT-related crimes. It's 2014 and you can imagine how many IT-related crimes there is. And these ones are just not among them. [...] For whatever reason the child sexual abuse issues have dropped from the agenda."*

*Save the Children*

Government also pays a supplement to those teachers who are working as supervisors for peer supporters in schools. Supervisors empower young peer supporters and help them whenever they have difficulties in carrying out their mission. Media education is not the main focus here, however it is an important component. This is another example mentioned by the respondents of how state provides indirect funding for tackling the issue.

Funding for the research is also provided by private organizations. For instance, one of the studies researching children's media use is funded by Helsingin Sanomat Foundation.

Previously I mentioned two ways that organizations can participate in the Media Literacy Week - by organizing own nationwide campaign or by participating in the working groups. There is also another option: they can provide funding or choose an alternative way of supporting activities of the Safer Internet Center during the Media Literacy Week. Providing funding is not a common choice for any of the partner organizations, however private industries do choose the indirect funding option.

For instance, publishers, TV and radio channels provide free media space to draw attention of their target audiences to the issue of media education and online safety in particular. This kind of cooperation provides much broader coverage making the issue more visual, as without this media space Safer Internet Center would not be able to reach this wide audience relying on their own resources.

*“Free media space is something that we do get, for example, from MTV media we did get free media time, which would cost one hundred thousand euros if we bought it, but they gave it to us for free.”*

*National Audiovisual Institute*

Together with that Safer Internet Center can impact not only wider audience, but also more specific target groups. For example, by cooperating with a magazine for kids they can reach children directly. This is something that KAVI, as an awareness center, is not able to do on their own, as they are mostly working with other organizations and companies, but not with children and young people. Moreover, the message will also be adjusted specifically for the target audience, finding the best way to influence the reader.

Traditional concept of media has expanded quite much in recent years and nowadays it also includes new media, such as social networks. Therefore, when speaking of free media space our experts also mention such networking platforms as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Not only radios, TV and printed media can spread the message effectively. Other business industries, like phone operators or software companies can share various information via their social media pages.

Usually they have a larger amount of social networks subscribers when, for example, compared to NGOs, therefore even one message can reach out to many more people.

*“And then there is DNA, Sonera and Elisa they have on their Facebook pages one hundred thousand likers, so if they put one mention of Media Literacy Week on their Facebook pages it reaches many more people. We have 700 likers on our Facebook page, so it gives us totally different volume via these organizations. And because MEKU itself doesn’t have any direct channels to children or young people, we only work via teachers and professional educators. But organizations that participate they have the contacts.”*

*National Audiovisual Institute*

Apart from free media space, business sector also has other means, alternative to funding, in order to support the activities of the awareness center. For example, companies, like Microsoft, provided prizes for the competitions held within Media Literacy Week.

From what was mentioned above I can conclude that providing direct funding is most common way of cooperation for the government, while private sector mostly opts for providing indirect funding. State provides funding for projects of NGOs, research projects and such. There is also indirect funding provided by the state too. Mentioned by the NGO, the efficiency of their cooperation with municipalities and other public institutions to great extent depends on economic situation in the country. This funding is not that visible when usual activities are carried out, however, when there is a lack of this funding it becomes rather evident.

## **5.2. Individual impact**

Even though in this research I am mainly interested in cooperation on the institutional level, during the interviews much attention was also given to an individual impact.

Volunteers are an important component of the work of any NGO and volunteering itself appears to be one of the most spread and needed ways of cooperation. Basically the work of the whole organization, as in the case of MLL, for instance, depends a lot on volunteers. There is a very developed network of peer supporters in Finland - nine out ten schools all over the country are covered by the peer-to-peer support program implemented by MLL. These children and young

people are providing help and support to their peers on a voluntary basis. Their voluntarism and willingness to improve society remains with them as they grow up. So even after graduating school they still keep volunteering to support others.

*“So we train them and provide counsellors with materials so they can support if children have problems online or they just want to talk about their online life, or relationships, online friends, online excessive gaming, or disturbing content.”*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

Government office also sees importance of involving volunteers in this work. I have previously described some of the options suggested to their partner organizations where they can choose in which way they want to participate in the Media Literacy Week. One of the options used to include the possibility for employees of these organizations to work as online safety experts during their working time. However, this option appeared to be too demanding for KAVI, as they have to train those online experts, prepare materials for them and so on. Therefore this option won't be on the list of suggested activities for the Media Literacy Week.

Volunteering is also supported by the business industries. Some companies tend to have various volunteering programs for their employees encouraging them to take more active stand and put their effort in developing local communities. Such program exists in Microsoft. Employees are trained and encouraged to share their expertise in new technologies with children and their parents. Most commonly through lessons and lectures given in schools. People who work in this field usually have a lot more knowledge about the possibilities and limitations of technology and how to get the best out of them.

There is a lot done on the voluntary basis - in NGOs, in private companies and on the municipality level as well. According to the expert from NGO it is a good thing that there is so much room for volunteering, because when things become mandatory they tend to be done in the minimal needed scope, just because it has to be done and not because it is supported by someone's initiative. In particular, it is very good that Finnish schools have a lot of independence in the activities they carry out, which provides floor for improvisation and creativity for teachers and for peer supporters.

One of the issues mentioned by a couple of actors is that involvement into the matter of cooperation depends a lot on a personal factor. On one hand, there is the personal connection between the employee and organizations which may have a rather low motivation to keep themselves engaged on their own. The employee is trying to keep as many partners engaged as possible motivating each of them through previously established personal connection. And whenever this “contact person” changes it may affect the future cooperation between the partners, as without this personal attachment some of them might lose the motivation at all.

*“This is something that worries my boss at the moment, because I am leaving and it has been on my responsibility to support these organizations and now who is going to do that? Because it has been only me for past two years and some of the relationships, of course, were quite personal and if the person changes in MEKU who takes care of these partnerships, then something might be lost. But it’s always like that in partnerships. Most active ones are involved in any way, but maybe it’s those who could do something, but they don’t know what to do, who would need a bit more support. So if there is no person to reach out to them it might be a bit difficult.”*

*National Audiovisual Institute*

On the other hand, there is the personal interest in the issue. This might be more typical for actors of the private sector, where direct job responsibilities do not include promotion of online safety for children as such. It may take quite a lot of personal initiative and time to be involved in creating safer online environment for children.

*“Well, I would say that what I am doing with online safety is more like a volunteer job for me. But also in our “corporate citizenship” program we can do voluntary work, certain amount for the year. But I am doing it on my own time, like in the evenings or weekends also. So it’s not officially part of my job. But of course, when I am with the teachers, when I am organizing events I talk about these things a lot.”*

*Microsoft*

This particular example brings me to conclusion that when this person is no longer working in the same company it may affect the amount of work done in this field, as well as the company’s attitude towards the issue. The same position might be taken up by a person with no intention to spend own time on these issues.

### **5.3. International cooperation**

Previous sections described various ways that different actors cooperate on the national level - being engaged in discussion, taking joint actions, providing financial and other kinds of support to initiatives. Same ways of cooperation are also common for international level.

Apart from communications on the local level, there is an ongoing global discussion covering the issues related to online safety and media education. This kind of discussions most commonly take place during various international conferences and seminars. Most frequently these events were mentioned by the academia expert.

Cooperation within international networks is rather crucial in the matters that relate to online safety and online crimes. Hotline working with sexual crimes against children passes the information to police, whenever they come across illegal content. However if they face the content that violate the legislation of another country they contact the hotline in that country and pass the case to them. In their turn they go through this material and contact their local police. In this way hotlines assure more effective tackling of the issue.

Networking also is of a great help when it comes to producing awareness materials. NGOs of the same international network can borrow best practices from each other and share their positive experiences with others, maximizing their efficiency.

Being part of the European-wide network provides the helpline with a valuable knowledge of the tendencies in online safety. Every call is reported to a statistical system. This way information is gathered, analyzed and shared through the whole network. Specially developed “trend index” allows to monitor the situation in all European countries and to see which issues are coming up. This helps them to prepare online counsellors for new issues or topics that can be brought up by young people who contact the helpline.

Cooperation through funding is also common on this level. European Commission is providing its financial support to various projects, such as Safer Internet Center.



## **5.4. What could be done more?**

There is a common notion that pretty much all the important actors are involved in the process already. However, there is a need for more work to be done by each actor.

State authorities and non-governmental organizations agree that each actor involved in this field could be doing more. In particular, there is much attention given to the issue during the Media Literacy Week and a lot of various actors take some action to draw public attention to the issue of media education and online safety. However, Media Literacy Week lasts only for a week and the rest of the time there is not that much done for the general public.

Including media education, as well as pedagogical use of the Internet communication technologies to the national core curriculum was among policy recommendations developed for Finland by the EU Kids Online research network (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012). Professionals in different fields - teachers, librarians, educators - should not be scared to let media tools into their work. This notion is commonly spread among NGOs and private sector representatives. Seems that policymakers have been rather attentive to these recommendations, as indeed, with the new academic year 2016 Finland introduces the new national core curriculum. Among other changes, much attention is given to the use of information and communications technology in the learning process. Finnish education system is built in such a way that this curriculum is more like a guideline or recommendation for educators, while each school has the freedom to decide on the specific approaches and find the best ways to apply these recommendations in the classrooms. Introduction of the new curriculum is not an event, but it is a process, which requires initiative from teachers. (Kivinen, 2015)

Among specific actors who could be involved more both NGOs and private sector mention libraries. Apart from simply providing access to media tools used for information search, libraries should also become “local literacy centers”. It is no longer enough to teach people how to use computers in technical sense, there is much more information that could be spread. Together with learning how to open a web browser, people could be taught how to be critical towards the websites they can visit with the help of that browser, at the same time showing the whole range of possibilities that open before them through the same browser.

Another specific actor is kindergarten. From the perspective of an NGO, media education is something that should go beyond school education and that could take variety of forms. For example, teachers do not actually need to have media devices to include them in our discourse. Children could be taught to play, socialize, by using only media concepts, but not media itself. So as they grow up they are familiar with the terms and usage of specific devices.

At the same time it is crucial that actors who are already involved would also expand their frames and think broader about what kind of things they could do. For instance, schools already implement a lot of programs to develop media education, however it could still be more integrated into other subjects and fields. Media devices could be used more during lessons not only to show the safe ways of using them, but to use them as a tool for positive activities.

*“There is still a lot of work to do, so that all the teachers feel that media life is part of their life and their work as well.”*

*Mannerheim League for Child Welfare*

One of the biggest gaps in the field of media education are activities aimed at parents. Finnish parents report to be highly interested in the Internet use of their children. Opposite to other European countries, in Finland parents thought that their children were bothered by something online to more extent than children themselves would report. It is a good indicator that parents are alert to the role of technology in children's lives, however parents also need support in order to better understand new environments their children live in (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012).

Most important media skills are learnt outside of formal education - with friends or at home. Technological progress is moving forward so fast that not all the parents keep up with the latest developments. Parents are eager to know more about internet safety and they see schools, state authorities and NGOs as good potential sources of this kind of information. Also, as parents report, manufacturers and retailers could also provide some safety tips and advices. (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012)

There is no need to train parents how to use all these new gadgets and devices, but there is a need for parents to understand that they should talk to their children about technologies and show their interest in what their children do. Children should know that if they have some kind of issue online they can always talk to their parents.

## **5.5. Summary**

This research provides an overview of the broad variety of actors involved in the issues of online safety and the ways these actors cooperate. Most commonly it is not just one to one cooperation, but it includes several actors. To great extent this cooperation is characterized in a positive manner and appears to be beneficial for involved parties.

Among the most common ways of cooperation this research has identified the following ones: discussion, joint actions and funding. Volunteering and contribution of international organizations were also underlined as important components among the ways of cooperation, though they were not presented as distinctive ways of cooperation.

Government participates in a lot of different ways. On the higher/national level it mostly takes part in providing financial support to research and various projects carried out in the field. On more local levels state is involved in cooperation with NGOs and private sector through joint actions.

Civil society stakeholders tend to cooperate with other stakeholder groups in various ways, taking maximum advantage of experience and expertise of their partners.

Private business representative also underlined the importance of cooperation. However, what is more important that active involvement of industries and close cooperation with business was also mentioned by other actors.

At the same time, academia representative described tight cooperation between different stakeholders as the national way of working on various matters.

During the interviews experts gave a good feedback about the cooperation and partnership overall. But there was also a general agreement that there is a need to do more by each actor and, despite it being already broad, the list of stakeholders involved should still broaden.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This thesis provided analysis of the discourse among interviewed experts around the topic of children's online safety, with the focus on cooperation between various actors. Experts from five organizations, representing different groups of stakeholders and working with online safety from different perspectives, were invited to participate in this research. In order to investigate the topic I used semi-structured interview as a qualitative research method for collecting data, and applied discourse analysis in combination with multi-stakeholder approach to analyze collected data.

One of the very important findings of this research is the difference of how online safety is viewed by Finnish actors in contrast to the general discourse around the topic. What is often seen as a separate subject of online safety on the global stage, in Finland is seen as a component of media education and is not taken out of its context. Interviewed experts consider these topics so closely related and intervened in so many ways that it does not seem rational to speak of them as separate phenomena. Instead of *online safety* Finnish experts tend to refer to the same issues using broader terms *media literacy* or *media education*. These views are shared among the actors, they all are talking about the same thing, focusing on *education* instead of *safety*. At the same time Finnish experts tend to focus more on opportunities of the Internet rather than the risks.

Most of the global discussion around children and Internet is built in a way that urges one to change something about the Internet: "Safer Internet", "Better Internet for Kids", "The Safe Network", etc. However, experts in Finland share the thought that it would be insufficient to limit our actions to that, but it is also important to make children aware of those risks on the net and teach them make smart choices, avoiding the risks and discovering the opportunities.

Finnish approach of seeing Internet as a space full of opportunities, rather than risks, encourages children to get maximum benefits out of it. At the same time, because of efficient media education strategies, Finnish children are equipped with necessary digital skills to avoid exposure to certain risks and know how to deal with those risks that they faced. This approach deserves to be shared among professionals of other countries and applied on a more global level. For instance, "The Strategy for a Better Internet for Children" developed by the European Commission could make a

stronger emphasis on children instead of the Internet by paying more attention to developing children's digital skills, rather than altering online content and developing more tools for parenting control. Certainly, there is a great need to create quality content on the Internet and parents should have adequate means to keep track of children's activities. However, developing necessary digital skills among children, parents and wider public should remain a priority.

Expanded understanding of the issue leads to expanded context around the topic. Consequently, it covers broader range of issues and involves wider variety of actors. More common way of seeing the issue limits the list of stakeholders to those which are directly related to online environment – operators, networking service providers, software developers. Meanwhile, by stressing on having a broader perspective on the issue, Finnish experts include actors of offline environment as vital stakeholders in these matters. Furthermore, because nowadays it is getting more and more difficult to draw the line between online and offline media, there is no need to separate these two. This way, TV-channels, digital game developers, children's magazine publishers also become important players.

This research introduces an overview of the broad variety of actors and the ways these actors cooperate. Most commonly it is not just one to one cooperation, but it includes several actors and several groups of actors. As described by DeNardis and Raymond (2013) there are four main groups of actors: states, intergovernmental organizations, firms, civil society. When actors of at least two different groups are involved in common activities, these activities can be classified as multi-stakeholder. It looks like multi-stakeholder cooperation is rather spread and common in Finland. Stakeholders operate same terminology and speak of the same issues, therefore, one might conclude that they cooperate a lot in this issue. Even though they are all working in the same field it is important that they get different perspectives and view the same problem from different angles. Many actors mention that it is necessary to keep involved in the dialogue with other stakeholders in regards to online issues and children's safety. Some actors see this cooperation as a national feature, something that is very typical for Finland not only in the field of online safety, but also in other fields.

Throughout the interviews experts mention a lot of different actors, among them: Internet providers, mobile network operators, magazines for children, TV and radio channels, other media providers, private foundations, private business, adult entertainment industry, social networking platforms, mobile phone companies, different ministries, supranational institutions, international networks, NGOs, research networks, municipalities, teachers, kindergartens, schools, media schools, universities, other education offices, school social workers, psychologists, police, libraries, parents, student counsellors, youth workers, youth forums, maternity clinics. The list is rather wide, but still it is far from covering all the stakeholders.

Among the most common ways of cooperation this research has identified the following ones: discussion, joint actions and funding. Contributions of civil society (as individual impact) and international organizations were also underlined as important components among the ways of cooperation, though they were not included in the more detailed analysis because the focus of this research was on institutions on the national level.

The role of the state was of a particular interest for me in this research. Finnish government has shown to be involved in the matter in a variety of different ways. On the higher level it mostly takes part in providing financial support to research and various projects carried out in this field. On more local levels state is involved in cooperation with NGOs and private sector through joint actions. Important characteristic of the state's involvement is not only contribution (by funding or other means), but there is an emphasis on dialogue, indicating that discussion is a rather important part of the process.

Finland represents a very interesting case of from the perspective of indirect state participation. Government is involved in dealing with the issue of online safety in much more complex variety of ways, not just through cooperation between different authorities. After having analyzed all the interviews I can see that every actor, in one way or another, is being supported or is in specific cooperation with those government structures that were not previously mentioned or described: MLL is sponsored from the income of national slot-machine monopoly; Ministries sponsor research and they use results in their policy-making process; representatives of Microsoft are

invited by municipalities to give lectures to children, parents and teachers about digital literacy and even to be involved in developing more advanced curriculum for schools.

Indeed, Finnish state is in a rather pro-active role in the matters of education in general and online safety in particular. Even though, these days state is argued to be too slow to adequately react on challenges posed by rapid technological development (Power, Morison, 2014), it is still carrying the function of developing national policies needed to respond to these challenges. Finnish state is involved in dealing with online safety on much deeper level and therefore takes an active stand in developing a media literate society. Because of close cooperation with other groups of stakeholders, Finnish state has a better chance of foreseeing the challenges and therefore is able to react briskly. This practice of deep involvement of state authorities is also worth spreading among other countries.

Civil society stakeholders tend to cooperate with other stakeholder groups in various ways, taking maximum advantage of experience and expertise of their partners. Private business representative also underlined the importance of cooperation. Importantly, this active involvement of industries and close cooperation with business was also mentioned by other actors, including state and NGOs. The current state of cooperation between actors was generally characterized as good. However, there is always room for improvement. Even though the Finnish list of stakeholders is already much wider due to conceptual differences, respondents underline the need of involvement of even wider range of stakeholders. Such institutions as libraries or kindergartens are expected to be more active when it comes to media education. While kindergartens can familiarize children with new media concepts through play (without having actual devices), libraries could take up the initiative of educating wider public, contributing to overall media literacy of the society.

However, not only new modes and ways of education should be introduced. There is a need to encourage the usage of new technologies within traditional forms of education, for example. Even the education reform is taking place, teachers and educators should also be facilitated to find best ways of using technology in their work.



Children and young people tend to be in the focus of the discussion around online safety and media education. However, we all live in this media environment and in order for us to be able to teach children how to behave online and how to build a positive online community we should also understand it ourselves. As soon as we expand our understanding of media literacy from only teaching children to more general public education, we will see that there is a need for even wider list of players to be involved.

Based on the findings of this study I would suggest to fill in the research gap by focusing future studies directly on the role of the state including representatives of various government authorities as respondents.

When it comes to researching new technologies and especially the ways they are used one of the weakest things is that the progress in this field is advancing very rapidly and sometimes the data presented a year before the research may no longer be valid at this point at a time. For example, after having summarized the findings of previous studies (examining the Internet usage among children) carried out in the years 2010-2012, I proceeded to the empirical part of my study. While collecting and analyzing the data, the Internet usage patterns changed dramatically. Various handheld devices entered the market and became very popular among children shifting their usage habits from stationary computers, used mostly in living rooms or bedrooms, to mobile phones or tablets, used anywhere inside and outside the house (Haddon, Livingstone, 2012; Mascheroni, Ólafsson, 2014). This is something that researchers of this field should be aware of.

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